

Message Text

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61

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R 052300Z MAY 74

FM AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2136

INFO AMCONSUL BRISBANE

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL PERTH

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

UNCLAS MELBOURNE 0513

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, AS

SUBJECT: NATIONAL WAGE TRIBUNAL RENDERS DECISION IN ANNUAL CASE

1. ARBITRATION COMMISSION FULL BENCH ANNOUNCED MAY 2
THE ANNUAL NATIONAL WAGE DECISION, BASED ON HEARINGS
WHICH EXTENDED FROM FEBRUARY 19 TO APRIL 5. IN QUICK
SUMMARY, THE DECISION CAN BE CHARACTERIZED AS MODERATE
AND, PROBABLY, SUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT TO SATISFY ALL
PARTIES TO THE HEARINGS: THAT IS, MANAGEMENT, TRADE
UNIONS, AND THE VARIOUS STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS
WHO GAVE TESTIMONY.

2. PROVISIONS OF DECISION ARE:

A) INCREASE IN WEEKLY MINIMUM WAGE BY \$8;
ESTABLISHING NEW WEEKLY MINIMUM OF \$69.50;
REPRESENTING AN AVERAGE \$5 A WEEK RAISE
FOR THE 4.7 MILLION WORKERS AFFECTED.
(MAY 1973 DECISION AWARDED \$9 INCREASE).

B) INCREASE IN TOTAL WAGE OF \$2.50 PLUS
2 PERCENT. (THIS IS EXACT REPEAT OF 1973

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DECISION).

C) NEW PROVISION: EXTENDS MINIMUM TO FEMALE WORKERS IN THREE STEPS, REACHING 100 PERCENT PARITY BY MID-1975.

D) NEW PROVISION: ANNOUNCED REVIEW OF FOREGOING PROVISIONS AFTER SIX MONTHS, BECAUSE OF WAGE/PRICE SPIRAL NOW PREVAILING. DECISION IS BINDING FOR 12 MONTHS FROM MAY 23, 1974, INCLUDING INITIAL 85 PERCENT OF MINIMUM FOR WOMEN WORKERS.

E) AS PART OF DECISION BUT NOT A PROVISION, TRIBUNAL ANNOUNCED THAT IT WOULD SEEK A TRIPARTITE MEETING INCLUDING GOVERNMENT, MANAGEMENT AND WORKER PARTICIPATION, TO REVIEW WHOLE STRUCTURE OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN AUSTRALIA. NO TIME WAS ESTABLISHED FOR CALLING THIS CONFERENCE BUT INDICATIONS ARE THAT IT WILL BE WITHIN SIX MONTHS.

3. COMMENT: PREDICTABLY, EVENING OF MAY 2, PRESS, RADIO AND TV REPORTED MANAGEMENT, WORKER AND GOVERNMENT LEADERS MAKING PIOUS NOISES OF JOY AT DISCOVERY OF WOMEN AS EQUAL WORKER. ALSO, DEPENDING ON PARTISAN ATTITUDE OF SPOKESMAN, SOLEMN WARNINGS WERE ISSUED ABOUT ONE OR OTHER OF REMAINING PROVISIONS. MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATIVES, MANY OF WHOM PRIVATELY WELCOMED SEMI-ANNUAL REVIEW OF WAGE FIXING MACHINERY, PUBLICLY FEEL THAT REVIEW PROVISIONS VITIATES PERMANENCY OF DECISION AND, THAT MONEY PROVISIONS ARE TOO HIGH. LABOR LEADERS, INCLUDING BOB HAWKE, PRESIDENT OF THE ACTU, FEEL MONEY PROVISIONS ARE TOO LOW. (PRIVATELY, ACTU NEVER EXPECTED TO GET \$9 OF THE \$11 THEY WERE DEMANDING AND PRIVATELY, MANAGEMENT ARE HAPPY THAT AWARD WAS NOT AT LEAST \$9). ACTU ECONOMIST, ROBERT JOLLY, WHO LED WORKERS CASE BEFORE TRIBUNAL, TOLD LABATT HE FELT DECISION WAS NEUTRAL BUT FAIR, AND IS DELIGHTED THAT TRIBUNAL HAS ACCEPTED PRINCIPLE OF PERIODIC REVIEW, EVEN IF NOT EVERY THREE MONTHS AS LABOR WAS HOPING.

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LABATT FEELS MOST SIGNIFICANT PART OF DECISION WAS ONE OF ESTABLISHING FUTURE CONFERENCE OF ALL SECTORS OF THE INDUSTRIAL COMMUNITY. LACK OF MANPOWER PLANNING HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANT FLAW IN AUSTRALIA'S INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND SUCH CONFERENCE IS FIRM AND LONG STEP TOWARD REMOVING CONSTANT ACERBATION CAUSED BY PURELY POLITICAL CONSIDERATION OF THESE PROBLEMS IN THE PAST. ALSO, LABATT

OBSERVES CONTENTS AND TIMING OF DECISION REFLECT
KEEN, SHREWD CHARACTER OF PRESIDING JUSTICE JOHN
MOORE. DELAY OF ANNOUNCEMENT UNTIL AFTER MAY 18
FEDERAL ELECTION DATE WOULD HAVE OPENED MOORE TO
ACCUSATIONF OF POLITICAL MANEUVERING. BASKET OF
SOME GOODIES FOR EACH, AT LEAST MOLLIFYING IF NOT
SATISFYING TO ALL POLITICAL PARTIES.
BROWN

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